

## HE STATE OF PORTLAND'S PARK SYSTEM

o the casual observer and even user, our city's park system appears impressive. And in some ways it is. However, virtually every part of the city is lacking in important ways— many of our facilities are old and inadequate, we have a large deferred maintenance problem, and we are not adding the capacity we need to be the livable city we want to be as we grow and change. We need to gear up on parks in fundamentally new ways during the next 20 years or we will lose the quality of life we enjoy."

Jim Zehren, SW Portland resident & Vision Team member

## PORTLAND'S PARK SYSTEM: WONDERFUL TO WOEFUL

### A CONUNDRUM

Portland's park system — "incredible" or "in crisis"? It depends on who you ask. A resident living near one of two new community centers probably thinks the park system is wonderful. A resident of North Portland who relies on University Park Community Center for recreation would likely disagree. In fact, our park system is at once sensational and shameful. Moreover, increased growth, changes in our culture and housing, and lack of funding threaten the park system legacy that is so vital to our city's quality of life.

### OUTSTANDING PARKS & RECREATION FACILITIES

The metropolitan region's residents and visitors enjoy a wide range of parks, open spaces, and recreation facilities and programs. Many agencies own and manage these public lands, including Metro, Tualatin Hills Park and Recreation District, the State, the cities of Gresham, Lake Oswego, and Oregon City. Within the City of Portland are 12,591 acres of public parkland and open space. Portland Parks and Recreation (PP&R) owns and manages over 10,000 of these acres and is the region's largest provider of parks and recreation. Metro and Oregon State Parks own the remaining acres of open space in the city.

Within those 10,000 acres of parkland are 6 public gardens, 25 community gardens, 35 community parks, 5 golf courses, 47 habitat parks, 98 neighborhood parks, 12 regional parks, 12 urban parks, and thousands of acres of urban forest. Parks provide a great deal of the beauty and vitality of our city and the region.

Portland's park system contains many nationally renowned parks and facilities — the International Rose



Each year Pittock Mansion attracts 80,00 visitors, who enjoy the view, history and open space.

Test Garden (the oldest in the U.S.), Governor Tom McCall Waterfront Park, Mill Ends (the world's smallest park), Pioneer Square (Portland's living room), and Pittock Mansion to name a few. Many city parks are visitor attractions that contribute significantly to the \$232M in tax revenues collected from Oregon's \$5.9B tourism industry.<sup>2</sup>

Portland's park system is one reason why this city is continuously ranked among America's best places to live. Portland's unique features — rivers, bridges, urban forest,

<sup>1</sup> See "PP&R Park Types & Recreation Spaces" in the Appendix for definitions of terms used in this report.

<sup>2</sup> Primary tax generators include the transient lodging, the gasoline tax, and corporate and personal income taxes resulting from travel-supported employment (POVA Web site).

his year we focused on economically vibrant cities that are...providing the

highest quality of life around...areas that have avoided urban sprawl and...put a premium on green space, culture and having an accessible city center... That is why you'll find Portland, Oregon as the No. 1 choice for 2000."



Money Magazine, December 2000

dramatic views, and skylines — give character to its parks. In return, parks add charm to neighborhoods, increase property values, and give city living irresistible appeal.

A recent Money magazine article credits parks as a key factor for naming Portland "America's Best Big City" (December 2000). The article praised Portland's ambience — a rare blend of natural environment, parks, and intriguing neighborhoods. It applauded the city for succeeding where most fail — for containing urban sprawl by creating a compact, livable city. This highly publicized honor awakened Americans to what Portlanders already know: connections between nature and neighborhoods (through parks, trails, and green spaces) are vital to urban livability. They build community by providing places to come together for respite, recreation and relaxation.

Among Portland's most distinguishing features are its rivers. The Willamette (the heart of the city) and the

mighty Columbia provide unique, largely untapped opportunities for river, trail, and habitat recreation. With the June 2001 opening of the Eastbank Esplanade, as well as the City Council's recent approval of a River Renaissance Vision, the city's dream of "the river as Portland's front yard" is one step closer to reality.3

Portland is also distinguished by its open space. Threequarters of city parkland are undeveloped as natural resource areas or undeveloped open space. Forest Park, containing half of Portland's parkland, is America's largest urban forest. Parks like Kelley Point, Powell Butte,

3 Plans are currently underway for the Willamette River Parks, Recreation, Habitat, and Trails Strategy and a master plan for Waterfront Park, the first in 25 years. These plans, along with the City's commitment to River Renaissance, indicate the growing awareness of our need to plan wisely and preserve the rich and enduring heritage of the Willamette River.



The recently opened Eastbank Esplanade offers exciting new access to the Willamette River



Oaks Bottom provide fabulous wetland habitat near the heart of the city.

### PORTLAND PARKS & RECREATION

Did you know that.....

- Percentage of land in Portland that is parkland: 9.6%
- Number of parks & recreation sites within the PP&R system: 247





Recreational opportunities and programs provided by PP&R nourish the body and spirit

and Oaks Bottom protect the region's ecological health and provide people with opportunities to connect with nature and also provide beauty and refuge from the city. Portland's moderate climate and ample rainfall sustain a proliferation of native and cultivated plants — flowers, trees and shrubs thrive in public and private gardens. The urban forest shelters us and the woodlands provide habitat to countless creatures.

Besides adding to neighborhoods' desirability and value, as well as the region's environmental health, Portland's park system provides opportunities for physical renewal. "Parks, paths, shorelines, and other places to get moving" are one reason Portland was named one of "America's 10 fittest cities." (Health Magazine, 2000), and outdoor recreation is also why Outside magazine named Portland one of the "10 Greatest Places to Live."

Trails are Portland's most popular recreational resource, with 150 miles of trails within parks. The 40-Mile Loop connects neighborhoods with parks and natural areas.



Community gardens provide more than fresh produce - they build friendships and pockets of green in urban neighborhoods

Construction of the Eastbank Esplanade completes another section of the 40-Mile Loop and provides Brooklyn and Buckman neighborhoods with a link to the Willamette River. Completing another section of the Springwater Corridor in 2002 will add to the trail system between OMSI and Gresham. As Portland's trail network expands, it links more recreational resources, and connects neighborhoods to shopping, schools and other civic features.

cc

rotecting and restoring our remaining urban green spaces is an important part of the City of Portland's effort to help threatened salmon, steelhead and cutthroat trout. The value and benefit of protecting our last best places—for people and for fish—will only increase as our population grows."

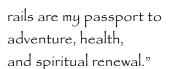


Jim Middaugh, manager, Endangered Species Program, Portland Bureau of Planning

Portland's 13 community centers provide recreational activities, after-school programs, and community gathering places that enhance urban living. Two new community centers — the first to be built in over 85 years — have exceeded the most optimistic expectations. East Portland Community Center serves 500 residents a day, and has become the heart of its community. Southwest Community Center is constantly busy, and was recently judged one of the country's "ten best

facilities" by Athletic Business magazine. From its 50 recreation facilities, PP&R offers thousands of recreation and educational programs that refresh body and mind for residents of all ages. Recreation activities are more than fun and games—they provide safe, supportive places for youngsters to learn, play, and make friends. After-school programs teach kids and teens respect for art, education, the environment, and themselves.

Vital partnerships expand opportunities to provide recreation and maximize the use of public resources. At University Park Community Center for example, Intel's African American employees train Roosevelt High School students on computers, helping to transform adolescents into productive adults. The Community Schools programs offer additional learning and play opportunities in a safe, convenient, and nurturing environment.



Barbara Walker, 40-Mile Loop board member & trails advocate ortland Parks and Recreation is a developer of people. Companies

today are not only concerned about the skills workers bring to the job, but also about a healthy state of mind. They are looking for people with good social skills who are team players. PP&R helps people develop these skills from cradle to grave."

Sam Brooks, Brooks & Associates

Portland residents are passionate about parks and recreation. A good share (44%) spend time every week in a park or recreation facility, and the vast majority (76%) visit a park or facility at least once a month.<sup>4</sup> Even more (85%) view parks and recreation as an essential part of the City<sup>5</sup>.

#### PARK BENEFITS NOT AVAILABLE TO ALL

Unfortunately, not everyone has equal access to these benefits. Virtually every sector of the city has at least one parkland deficiency. In Northeast Portland, residents have little habitat parkland or access to natural resource areas. In Outer East and Southwest Portland, where there are few developed neighborhood and community parks, residents get little benefit from the social and recreational programs that parks provide. Since little land appropriate for neighborhood and community parks is available in the city, remedying park deficiencies presents a formidable challenge.

Although community centers provide the recreational programs and community gathering places that give appeal to urban living, those benefits are unavailable to some residents. Certain areas of the city have no

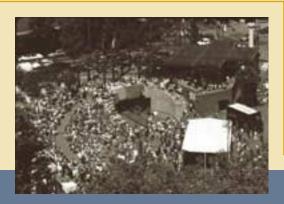


community centers, and others have centers that are housed in old, ill-adapted buildings that lack fundamental elements. Sellwood Community Center (SCC), for example, was built in 1909 as a rooming house. It does not have adequate security surveillance, ADA accessibility,

- 4 Davis & Hibbitts, 2001
- 5 Davis & Hibbitts, 2001
- 6 See Sub-Area Section for detailed information about parks in each sub-area.



Long lines at Mt. Scott Community Center demonstrate the need for equitable distribution of facilities and programs throughout the city.



ixty-five thousand more people will be living in Portland by 2020.

As a community, we have to rise to the challenge of being far-sighted enough to accommodate that growth, but also to never forget that we must take care of what we have.

We can and must do both!

Mary Anne Cassin, 2020 Project Manager, Portland Parks & Recreation

or storage, and many rooms lack basic equipment for classes and programs. Yet, the neighborhood depends on SCC to fulfill its recreation needs. Since recreation programs and facilities are inextricably intertwined, the shortage of quality community centers limits the availability, breadth, and quality of recreation programs.

Besides parkland and community centers, Portland's park system lacks sufficient aquatic facilities and sports fields. Both are heavily used, highly programmed, and in short supply. Of the 25 community garden sites, only two have room for new gardeners — more than 400 people are waiting for garden plots. As more people crowd into existing parks and facilities, user conflicts are increasing and the quality of park resources is declining.



Portland Public Schools and PP&R have shared facilities since the early 20th century.

Lack of access to parks and few connections between parks limits the benefits of the system. Highways, heavy traffic, and industrial properties prevent many Portland residents from accessing river recreation on the Columbia and Willamette Rivers. Fragmentation reduces optimal conditions and forfeits the immense benefits of a holistic system.

#### COOPERATION AND COORDINATION

The benefits that Portlanders receive from parks and recreation are magnified by effective management and coordination among the many state, regional, county, and city agencies involved with parks and recreation. Successful partnerships with community, corporate, and government associates improve program offerings and leverage scarce resources. Significant partnerships include the following:

**Portland public schools.** Joint-use agreements with local school districts provide residents with thousands of hours of recreation, enrichment, and education. In 2000, PP&R and local school districts shared use and maintenance of nearly 100 recreation facilities (e.g., fields, courts, gyms, and pools). Through the Community Schools program, hundreds of children every week benefited from supervised, structured after-hours activities.

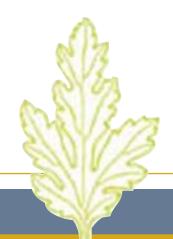
Examples from across the nation show that safe parks and well-run recreation programs cut crime dramatically. More youth crimes are committed and more teen pregnancies occur between 3:00 and 7:00 p.m. than at any other time of day. Kids with positive, constructive alter-

<sup>7</sup> See the Appendix for a detailed discussion of PP&R partnerships.

<sup>8</sup> Green Cities Initiative.

### Did you know that....

- PP&R uses school gyms 25,448 hours/year and baseball and soccer fields 79,784 hours/year
- Schools use PP&R fields, tennis courts, golf courses, pools and community centers 38,712 hours/year



natives are less likely to engage in negative behaviors.

**Government partners.** Among PP&R's city bureau and regional partners are:

- Metro's Regional Parks and Greenspaces Program - land acquisition and co-management of some trails and property;
- Portland Development Commission park development in urban renewal areas (e.g., Jamison Park in the River District;
- Bureau of Planning numerous city initiatives including the River Renaissance, the River District and North Macadam;
- Bureau of Environmental Services resource protection and restoration, land purchase and management, participation in education through Watershed and Revegetation Programs;
- Portland Water Bureau joint natural resource management of Powell Butte, maintenance of decorative fountains in the parks.

**Corporate and community partners.** These partners offer countless hours of time and resources:

- Friends Groups fundraising, development and maintenance of parks, gardens and facilities with 65 groups;
- Corporations capital improvement projects through corporate donations as well as the volunteer assistance of corporate employee groups (e. g., Nike, Intel, the Trailblazers);
- Community partnerships and volunteers education and park improvements with community volunteers who contribute more

hen you've got a high

percentage of single working

parents, it doesn't take a rocket

scientist to realize that you need

after-school programs for kids....

We bring kids in and give them a high

dose of self-esteem, appreciation for

education, social harmony, anger

management, and environmental

education. Through recreation,

PP&R becomes a little bit of sugar

that helps the medicine go down—if

kids knew we were serving more than

Charles Jordan, Director, Portland Parks & Recreation

fun and games, they wouldn't come."



he first summer | moved to Portland | had two toddlers. | took them to the Grant Park playground almost every day. At the end of that summer | received a questionnaire on my doorstep from an urban studies professor at PSU who was researching how community forms in neighborhoods. One of the questions asked, how many people in your neighborhood do you know by name? | counted up 80. | had met almost all of them at the park!"

Barbara Scharff, NE Portland resident & Vision Team member



Portland residents help build a trail at Alberta Park.

than 400,000 hours annually to help plan, maintain, and program parks and facilities. Examples are the Neighborhood Tree Liaison and the Adopt-A-Park Programs, which has recently expanded into schools;<sup>9</sup>

Portland residents - park planning with hundreds of residents who participate in meetings and workshops to plan and develop their parks.

### **MISSED OPPORTUNITIES**

Community needs are improved by developing, maintaining, and strengthening partnerships. Yet partnerships – with both individuals and organizations – are not always optimized. Some work very well, others have potential, some are not successful because of:

- A lack of comprehensive strategies for managing partnerships – that is, guidelines for initiating, tracking, managing, documenting, evaluating, or ending collaborations with individuals or groups.
- Not enough staff to capitalize on available volunteer assistance.
- Staff not trained in volunteer supervision, even though skilled supervision is key to volunteer satisfaction and retention.

The 1999-2000 Volunteer Impact Report states that over 6,000 people contributed in excess of 350,000 <u>documented</u> hours (it is a conservative estimate since not everyone reports their volunteer hours), the equivalent of over 170 Full Time Employees (FTE).





While there are numerous opportunities to improve parks and recreation services and manage them more effectively, there are also obstacles. Among them are cross-jurisdictional issues, increasing regulations and environmental mandates to protect water quality, wetlands and habitat. These require large amounts of staff time to ensure that park, natural resource, and urban forestry concerns are addressed in city and regional planning. While there are many successes at protecting and restoring natural resources at the city and regional levels, there is a need for better coordination.

There is no comprehensive management plan for parks that sets priorities and strategies for all the elements to be considered. Decisions about acquisition, management, programming, and protection of park resources are largely ad hoc. Park resources are often managed independently rather than holistically. Many parks lack master plans to guide development, management, and funding decisions. Without guidelines, resources are not optimized and needs are not met.

Basic inventory and assessment information is needed to produce effective plans. Without valid, reliable information on which to base management decisions, it is difficult to effectively anticipate and prepare for new park uses, or manage resources like the urban forest. Without basic information such as canopy cover, species diversity, and distribution, management is reactive instead of proactive.



Over 26,000 trees were planted last year, many by volunteers, in parks, natural areas and along roadsides.





# HE FUNDING PICTURE

ollaboration saves money and improves service delivery.

By and large, people don't know or care who or which government agency provides the service. They do know, however, that they're paying a the bill to have the grass mowed, trails connected, gym doors open, urban rivers and streams clean and accessible recreation programs available to those who need them."

Joey Pope, Vision Team Chair

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## PORTLAND'S PARK SYSTEM: THE FUNDING DILEMMA



### SDC—A MUCH-NEEDED NEW SOURCE OF FUNDING

In 1998, City Council approved a residential Park Systems Development Charge (SDC) that partially offsets the costs associated with housing development for needed services. At the current rate of about \$1,500 per unit, the residential development fee generates about \$1M a year for park capital improvements. The SDC has funded several major new acquisitions in Outer East in the past year—an area that is experiencing much new growth.

Unfortunately, SDC funds, which are likely to decline in an economic downturn, are restricted to land acquisition and capital improvements in areas of population growth and new development. SDC funds cannot be used to correct existing parkland deficiencies, nor can they be used to meet the equally vital operations or maintenance

A 19-acre expansion of Parklane Park in Outer East was made possible by SDC funds.

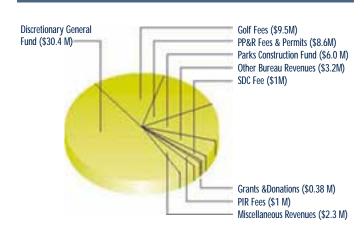
needs. At a rate that is 30% of the legal maximum, the SDC assessment only partially offsets the true costs of park development in Portland, and the fee is currently only assessed for residential development.

# FUNDING INADEQUATE & UNPREDICTABLE

In fiscal year 2001/02, PP&R will spend just under \$60M to operate, maintain, and expand Portland's park system. As the chart below shows, about half of PP&R's financial support (\$31M) comes from the city's General Fund (i.e., discretionary resources that the Council allocates).

The city supports about three-fifths of PP&R's \$50M operating budget (i.e., ongoing expenses), and about one-fifth of its \$10M capital budget (i.e., one-time park system enhancements). A small (and unpredictable) fraction of PP&R's budget — one half of one percent — comes from grants and donations.

### PP&R RESOURCES (ADOPTED, FY 2001/02)





Did you know that .....

Half a million residents visited a neighborhood park last year.

PP&R removed 924 tons of garbage from parks and recreation sites in 1998-99.

In addition to the discretionary General Fund monies, PP&R receives revenue from user fees, interagency agreements, and a variety of other sources. Over the last 10 years, fees have been constantly raised to provide the variety and scope of programs that the public needs and wants. This effect is felt most keenly by those on fixed incomes or with lower incomes.

PP&R operating expenses have risen steadily in recent years due to increasing use, annexation, utility costs and an aging park infrastructure. Unfortunately, over many decades, park system funding has not kept up with needs. Numerous parks need major renovation and many recreation facilities are in poor condition. There is a backlog of park maintenance projects that will take \$57 million8 to "catch up" and PP&R will need an additional \$58 million to maintain existing assets at acceptable standards over the next 20 years. (These figures do not take into account the impacts of responding to new growth or existing deficiencies.)

Budget impacts from the lack of adequate funding for public schools affects parks and recreation. As public schools have (and will likely continue to) cut youth programs, PP&R's role as the state's second-largest provider of youth programs becomes even more vital. PP&R now provides many of the arts, athletics and recreation programs that schools cannot.

Budget shortfalls hamper PP&R's ability to serve community needs and manage the park system effectively. Although parks are a critical part of the city's infrastructure, resources are not sufficient to maintain them. Currently there are only two staff people to maintain the 5,000 acres of Forest Park — one of the largest urban natural areas in the country.

A lack of funding constrains even self-sustaining programming. Yet programmed events draw people to a park, increase potential users' park system awareness and interest, and increase overall use of a park. Studies from across the nation show that as park usage increases, revenues increase and vandalism and crime decrease.

Attracting park users and building public support for parks and recreation requires effective communication and outreach, but PP&R cannot afford to engage in the basic public communications activities of providing a quarterly program guide to all the residents in the city on a regular on-going basis.

Lack of sufficient funds for coordination makes managing Portland's urban forest and park system fragmented and inefficient. Coordinating and implementing the complex requirements needed to protect natural resources – thousands of acres of which are under PP&R's jurisdiction – is increasingly difficult, and increasingly important.

### **FUNDING OPTIONS**

In the face of declining revenues and funding uncertainty, PP&R struggles to maintain the quality of the city's park system. A dependable funding source would allow PP&R to acquire land, develop parks and provide ongoing maintenance with less concern about competition with other city agencies. It would ensure that the city's public assets and natural resource heritage are protected. The Vision Team identified the following potential revenue sources:

General Obligation Bonds: These can be used to fund acquisition and new capital projects. For

10 August 1999 PP&R Financial Plan Summary.



example, a \$75M General Obligation Bond issue, which would require voter approval, would cost homeowners about 23 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value (i.e., about \$35 a year for a median priced home of \$165,700).

- Grants and Gifts: These can be used for any kind of project, including operations and maintenance. The Vision Team found that park foundations play an active role in many major cities across the country. These foundations help raise money for land acquisition and special projects. Currently, grants and donations are a very small fraction of PP&R's budget one-half of one percent and one which varies from year to year.
- Local Option: This is a limited tax that can be used for deferred maintenance projects and for operating expenses. A local option tax is limited to 5 years for operations and to 10 years for capital, and is subject to a rate cap. In 1989, Portland residents authorized the city to levy a local option for \$2.4m/3 years for youth-oriented park improvements.
- Regional Funding: PP&R owns, operates, and maintains many facilities that are used heavily by people from outside the city. However, the cost of maintaining these facilities falls entirely on Portland taxpayers. A broader funding base would support these regional facilities more equitably. Metro is considering asking voters for such support to finance a new Regional Fund for Parks and Community Livability.
- Niche Taxes: Taxes on selected items or activities can generate significant revenue. The City of Seattle

- currently levies a 5% admissions tax on various entertainment events, which raises approximately \$7.8 million per year. Entertainment or amusement taxes provide stable revenue and a moderately broad base; however, they may be difficult to administer and/or costly to collect. The City of Ashland levies a restaurant and beverage tax. This option can bring in high revenue relative to cost, is less regressive since it arguably taxes a luxury item, and is borne to a certain degree by tourists. While niche taxes would provide stable funding, they would need to be considered as part of a total funding picture.
- Systems Development Charge: The SDC is reviewed periodically and adjusted as appropriate to support park acquisition and development in areas of growth. It could be extended in the future to include non-residential development. (See page 19 for more information on the SDC.)

Parks make cities desirable places to work or locate businesses. Parks add character to neighborhoods, build community, attract urban homeowners and increase property values. Portland's parks, many of which are major visitor attractions, contribute significantly to the tax revenue that supports all city services.

Ultimately, parks and open space are not an expense. They are an investment that produces a significant economic return for the city and the region.

<sup>11</sup> Tourism studies for 2000 indicate that about five million tourists dined last year in Portland metro-area restaurants (POVA Web Site), contributing significantly to eating and drinking establishment sales of \$2.85 billion.

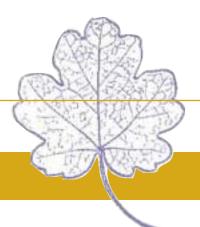


## RENDS

e are fortunate, but the next generation will not be as fortunate, if we do not act now to preserve our remaining natural areas. Acre by acre, year by year, we're losing our treasured habitat to development. For the benefit of our children, their children and the wildlife that depend on these special places, we have an obligation to protect what makes the Portland area so wonderful."

Jim Desmond, SE Resident & Vision Team member

## PORTLAND'S PARK SYSTEM: HEADED FOR TROUBLE



### **POPULATION CHANGING**

Demographic, recreational, and funding trends suggest that both current shortages and future needs will intensify and produce inequities in our cherished park system. Trends that will impact Portland's park system by 2020 include the following:

- Minority populations will grow rapidly from the current 15% of Portland's population to 31%. Outreach efforts to ethnic and minority groups have been limited, and few current staff members are bilingual.
- Portland households will change in several ways. The number of persons per household will decrease. The number of single-person (particularly widows and widowers) and "unrelated" households will increase, as will the number of "empty nester" and "single parent family" households. These changes will alter the demands on Portland's parks and recreation facilities.
- Portland's population will age. The number of people aged 60 and older will increase 62% over the next two decades and they will make up a larger percent of the population. This older population is expected to increase the demand for recreation such as wildlife viewing and walking and "softer" types of active recreation.
- While older people will be a larger percent of the population, the number of young people is expected to remain relatively stable, resulting in a constant need for active, programmed recreation.

Our region is in the midst of dramatic change. As our population changes, so will demands on the park and recreation system. Increasing numbers of park users already strain the park system's ability to accommodate the city's recreation needs. This will intensify in the future.

### **INCREASING DEVELOPMENT**

By 2020, the region's population is projected to grow by half a million people — 65,000 of whom will be living in Portland. A larger population will increase demand for parks, recreation facilities and programs. Increased density will increase demand for open space as well as recreation facilities and programs.

Portland's park system will be tremendously challenged to keep pace with population growth and satisfy residents' needs in 2020. As demand for housing increases, demand for recreation opportunities and activities grows. Open land and green spaces appropriate for parkland disappear. Heightened competition for a fixed amount



The valves at Wilson Pool are just one example of the hidden problems in infrastructure caused by deferred maintenance.



ore people are coming. The pressure to build houses and shopping centers on the available vacant land will be intense and unless we take steps to acquire land now, parks, nature trails and habitat will be forever lost for today's citizens and generations to come. We have a moral obligation to ensure that our legacy to future generations is no less than the inheritance we enjoy today.

Tony Palermini, Retired school superintendent & Vision Team co-chair

of land drives up prices. Garnering the resources necessary to meet park system capital needs will be increasingly difficult.

Redevelopment and increased density in existing areas also contribute to park shortages, loss of natural resources and impacts to the urban forest. New regional and town centers will require new parks and open spaces. Virtually every area of the City has park deficiencies now. Current park shortages will only make it more difficult to provide adequate parks and facilities for 2020.

Protecting natural resources is very important<sup>12</sup> to most residents who look to parks to maintain the quality of life and the quality of environment. As existing open space is

developed, more people will seek and use park system resources — crowding into existing parks and facilities, escalating user conflicts, and degrading resource quality.

Oaks Bottom provides an example of the impact of increasing density on the city's natural resources. Because it is close to residential areas, Oaks Bottom attracts many visitors. Inappropriate off-road bicycle use causes damage and erosion. According to the Audubon Society, dogs permitted to run off leash have attacked wildlife many times. The demands made by a growing population will only increase these problems.

12 Davis and Hibbitts, 2001



Traditional park uses like sports courts continue to be popular.



Over 40% of city residents own dogs and the need for places to let them play is growing.



Young people need safe, fun places to pursue new and emerging sports.



e've got to project ahead twenty years from now. We

### **DEMAND FOR MORE RECREATION**

Emerging recreational activities place new demands on an already strained park system. The city is unable to satisfy rapidly growing public demand for skate boarding, and dog owners clamor for more off-leash areas. Demands for traditional recreation also increase — there are not enough soccer fields in any part of the city. Decisions about resource allocations must balance current demands with projected park system needs. Although we must plan now to invest for the future, accurate predictions are difficult in this evolving environment.

The public's strong desire for nature recreation will continue to grow and intensify. Heavy media coverage of population growth trends has raised Oregonians' awareness of environmental and livability issues. As population density increases, our yearning for connections to nature, for refuge from the built environment, will intensify.

"Nature" is one of the Oregon tourism industry's greatest draws and nature recreation, is a key component of the state's economy. The rapid growth of tourism (55% in 10 years) challenges Portland's park attractions. Increasing numbers of visitors escalate user conflicts, increase overuse, and endanger plants and wildlife.



expect a half-million more

people in the region—as

many as now live in Eugene,

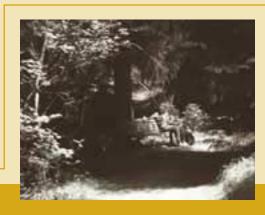
Salem, Gresham, Hillsboro,

and Beaverton combined!

They've got to live someplace,

and they've got to play someplace.

Zarí Santner, Manager, Portland Parks Planning & Development Division



THE / /EED

s good stewards we must secure additional land now to serve
the increasing density within the area. Land purchased
today will seem a small expense in the future, but will be
'invaluable' to our children's children. It is time to act
and not just rest on the legacy handed down to us
by our forefathers."

R. Scott Montgomery, Developer & Vision Team member



## PORTLAND'S PARK SYSTEM: PORTLANDERS ARE PASSIONATE

### PARKS ESSENTIAL PART OF CITY

Portlanders view parks as part of the fabric of the city, as appealing gathering places where they carry on leisure, cultural, and social activities. A vast majority of residents consider parks and recreation an essential city service and they visit a Portland park or recreation facility at least once a month<sup>13</sup>. Nearly a million and a half residents last year refreshed body and mind in parks and recreation programs. Millions attend festivals and events at Govenor Tom McCall Waterfront Park. Well over half a million rounds of golf were played on city courses. Residents strongly favor adding more recreation facilities and programs to the park system.

Access to nature is important to Portlanders who strongly favor acquiring public open space and preserving habitat within the city, as well as acquiring and developing land for Columbia and Willamette River recreation<sup>14</sup>.

Community involvement in planning, management, and maintenance of public parks and facilities is at an all-time high. Our parks and natural areas have never had as many visitors as they have now, but they are being loved to death — and many suffer from overuse.

### FEW AWARE OF THREATS TO SYSTEM

The vast majority of Portlanders believe we have an excellent park system with great recreation programs. Few of us understand that the city's park system is in peril.

Few residents are aware that many of our recreation facilities are old and inadequate. Most are unaware that all areas of the city lack some park services now, and that more areas of the city will be underserved in the future.

Most Portlanders are unprepared for the impact of an additional half-million people in the region and do not realize the city is not adding enough park system capacity to maintain the quality of life that we cherish. Our city's investment in a wonderful park system is in jeopardy, and the cost of saving our park system will be much greater later. It is imperative that we act now.

Did you know that.....

- PP&R provides 6 to 7 million hours of recreation programming each year
- 27,000 kids take swim lessons annually in PP&R's nationally recognized aquatics program
- Over 3,000 people garden in Community Garden plots each year

<sup>13</sup> Davis & Hibbitts, 2001

<sup>14</sup> Davis & Hibbitts, 2001